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WILLIAM WILBORN

Hiawatha's Calculations

As his birthday was impending  
Hiawatha asked his mother,  
Yellow-backed Ticonderoga,  
For a pocket calculator  
With its batteries included.  
Hiawatha had no pocket  
But he had Monongahela,  
Leather pouch Monongahela  
Which he slung upon his shoulder.  
Up to now he kept a slide rule  
In the pouch Monongahela,  
Kept it limber at the ready  
Should the East Wind, Potrzebie,  
Call for any calculations.  
But he knew that Hewlett Packard  
Marketed a better unit  
Smaller than a pack of Luckies  
Or the can Sir Walter Raleigh  
He could carry where he wandered  
When he stalked the deer Probono  
Through the dewy dell primeval,  
Tracked him to his secret dwelling  
Where he hung his mossy antlers.  
But his mom Ticonderoga,  
Deaf and rather absentminded,  
Rather than a multiplier  
Bought a pocket *stultifier*  
Which she gave to Hiawatha  
On his seven hundredth birthday.  
(’Twas the era patriarchal:  
People lived almost forever.  
That is why the bow and arrow  
And the tomahawk and slide rule  
And the pocket stultifier  
Coexisted all together.)  
Hiawatha took to texting  
Spinabifida, his cousin,  
Im lik etn pnut bter  
smpn stiki lik wtevr.  
And in short our Hiawatha

Who'd excelled at calculation  
Scorned his spelling and his woodcraft,  
Sank into a moral quandary.  
So the West Wind, Nancylopez\*,  
Came and blew his soul asunder,  
Lost it in the farthest reaches  
Of Aurora Borealis  
As a guide to those who wander  
In the cybernetic stupor  
Of a pocket apparatus  
When they might be hunting squirrels  
For their meat to make some tacos,  
For their hides to make pajamas.

\*Poetry abhors a quibble.  
Yes, I know that Nancy Lopez  
Is a golfer -- and a good one!  
Why must women be restricted  
To the kitchen and the bedroom?  
Miss Lamarr took out a patent  
On the musical torpedo\*;  
Miss Jane Russell had the muscle  
To sustain the cantilevered  
Howard Hughes brassiere in earnest.  
Why must we deny these women?  
Let them make their contributions!  
Thus Ms. Lopez is the Zephyr.  
Everyone should have a hobby.

\*Miss Lamarr and Mr. Antheil  
(George Antheil, the great composer)  
Thought to put the mechanism  
Of a parlor pianola  
In the tube of their torpedo  
So to lull the German sailors  
With Beethoven, Brahms and Schubert  
To a state of inattention  
Till the unforeseen explosion  
Caused a lengthy interruption  
In their sailorly procedures.  
But the admirals objected  
To the size of pianolas  
Not to mention the expenses  
Entertaining German sailors,

Therefore kept their own torpedos,  
Sleek American torpedos  
Which but rarely had exploded  
When by luck they hit their targets,  
Since the bulk of these torpedos  
Sailed beneath the hun's destroyers.  
So the dreams of Mr. Antheil  
And the plans of Hedwig Giesel  
Came to absolutely nothing  
Till the birth of the computer  
And the pocket stultifier,  
Which but rarely miss their target,  
Thus redeeming their contraption  
As an agent of destruction.  
Thus all civil culture ended.  
This ironically completed  
What Herr Goebbels had intended.

Poe Pourri

Years ago, when I was sober  
last, 'twas in the month October  
(August for the fact of it,  
October for a better rhyme),  
'twas the month when you were married.  
Oh, my lost one, how I carried  
on in metered feet of time,  
those metered, teetered, feet of mine  
that pattered, nattered, never mattered  
nohow to that heart of thine,  
designing, whining Proserpine.  
For you to Dis and Dat were married,  
to the underworld were carried  
by those brothers of dispersion  
(they are brothers in my version  
simply for the somber sa-ake  
of the lovely verse trochaic  
and because the thing's perverse:  
only that and nothing worse).  
As I said, when I was sober  
not just now, back in October)  
you were married to these brothers  
both, and possibly to others,  
representing, subtly venting,  
your objections to my rhymes.  
Which you voiced at other times  
in a manner quite specific,  
in a torrent too terrific  
for this tender heart of mine:  
"Go to hell," quoth Proserpine.

Down beside the river reedy,  
dressed in dandy duds but seedy,  
scribbling on a dumpster wall,  
I bequeath my verses subtle  
knowing there is no rebuttal  
needed where we poets go  
(bathos is in Greek "below")  
and our words are published all.

-- This must be a different Hades  
from the one where lords and ladies,  
kings and counsellors abide;  
different from the grounds milady  
treads with her companions shady,  
Dis and Dat and Dese and Dose  
and some perhaps more gentrified,  
proctologists and men of pride.  
Where the gold and glitter gathers,  
where the cappuccino lathers,  
where the maid discreetly knocks  
to comb her hyacinthine locks,  
whilst I languish in a box  
with half a jug of Riunite  
scratching at these gray graffiti  
and she tongues a plate of ziti,  
peas, and heavy cream and ham  
paid for by an alderman.

May her uterus prolapse,  
both her udders pert collapse,  
the veins in her fine shanks advance  
till she resembles maps of France,  
a fat girl in elastic pants.  
And when, grown grossly adipose,  
a bag of jelly for a nose,  
may my lady get a dose.  
And I, whose heartstrings were a lute  
distempered, light a fine cheroot  
and brood upon a state of things  
where the poets pull the strings,  
where I regain my lost Lenore,  
where no damned bird croaks "Baltimore."